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SUBJECT: PUTTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE DRC

1. (U) Summary: Amnesty International's October report, 'DRC: Mass Rape- Time for Remedies' provides a generally accurate picture of the nature of sexual violence in eastern DRC. Its suggestion that the international community has ignored this crisis, however, is untrue. The USG, for example, already has assisted over 10,000 victims and dedicated over \$5.8 million dollars to help combat gender-based violence. End Summary.

2. (U) On October 26, Amnesty International released a large, detailed report on sexual violence in the DRC with documented cases. 'DRC: Mass Rape- Time for Remedies' calls on the GDRC and the international community to facilitate access to medical care for rape survivors, ensure that rehabilitating the health care system and improving security in the eastern provinces are priorities, take measures to prevent survivors from being subjected to social and economic exclusion, and facilitate survivors' search for justice. Although the summary's tone suggested that medical concerns of rape victims have been sidelined, other sections of the report highlight the abysmal state of the Congo's medical infrastructure.

3. (U) The report's description of the problem appears generally accurate. Its suggestion that the international community has ignored this crisis, however, is untrue. A number of donors, including the USG, have been working actively to combat this very serious issue since 2001.

USG Efforts

4. (U) USAID addresses immediate and longer-term needs of survivors of sexual violence, their families, and their communities in areas of eastern Congo that have been most affected by armed conflict. In January 2004, USAID conducted an assessment mission, published an extensive report entitled 'Sexual Terrorism: Rape as a Weapon of War in Eastern DRC,' and developed a broad gender-based violence strategy. USAID provides funding to experienced international organizations which work with local NGOs, health structures, and community based organizations to increase their capacity to provide holistic support to survivors including medical, psychosocial, protection, and socio-economic reintegration services, while promoting judicial support and referral when appropriate.

5. (U) For instance, with 2002-2004 funding from Victims of Torture and TIP (\$1,788,688 and \$470,000 respectively) 12 local organizations, which are mostly headed by survivors, received about \$650,000 in sub-grants. The rest of the funding provided logistical support, materials in kind, medicines, training, workshops, information dissemination, coordination and referral to other services. Since 2002 these activities, which include post-rape reconstructive surgery at Panzi Hospital, mobile clinics which respond quickly to reported incidents of rape, and the first successful prosecution of a rape case in eastern DRC have assisted over 10,000 survivors, their families, and their communities.

Looking Ahead

6. (U) For FY04-FY06, USAID/DRC received \$2,500,000 from the Victims of Torture Fund to support around 20 local organizations and health structures through international NGOs and \$1,000,000 in OFDA funds to provide health services and training through UNICEF and an international NGO. In addition, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives provides grants to local community-based organizations that also directly benefit victims. The total USAID budget specifically for gender-based violence from June 2002- September 2006 is \$5,758,688.

7. (U) In the past two years, the Embassy also used its limited Democracy and Human Rights Funds to support seven local organizations that promote women's rights and support

survivors of sexual violence, including Centre Olame in Bukavu. In addition, the Embassy was awarded a special \$50,000 grant in FY2004 to provide sexual violence survivors with access to judicial support services. As access continues to improve, and with continued USG funding, we are well-positioned to provide additional much-needed assistance for the victims of violence in eastern Congo.

Other Efforts

18. (SBU) The European Union, the European Commission, and European bilateral donors, notably the Belgians and the Swiss, have also provided significant resources. A late 2003 \$30 million joint initiative by UN agencies to stop sexual violence in the DRC was well-received, but donors agreed the plan needs some revision. When revised, the plan could provide additional funding to address gender-based violence in the Congo. In addition, UN agencies and MONUC have prepared several reports on various aspects of this wide-scale problem, and MONUC plays an important role facilitating access for various NGOs. Post understands that a number of international organizations working on gender-based violence in the DRC are extremely disappointed that AI researchers did not contact them to discuss their existing and planned programs.

19. (U) Although the Congolese government has condemned gender-based violence at the highest levels, it has not taken much concrete action at this stage. The Justice, Social Affairs and Women's Affairs ministries have tried to develop limited programming to combat gender-based violence, but lack funding, capacity, and expertise. Unfortunately, well-intentioned activities often do not ensure confidentiality or protect survivors of violence,

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particularly in a culture in which, historically, women are considered second-class citizens. In addition, security concerns, poor medical infrastructure, limited resources (the budget for a country the size of the USA east of the Mississippi river is only \$450 million), and lack of roads contribute to the Congolese government's inability to effectively deal with this problem.

Comment

10. (SBU) We are pleased that this report has focused high-level international attention on gender-based violence in the DRC. We note, for example, that the producers of the Oprah Winfrey Show are considering doing a program this month in Bukavu focusing on this issue. We hope that international media interest can be harnessed to help further the work being done by the USG, other donors, and local and international NGOs which have been working on this issue for a number of years.

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